Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. _____

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY, a minor,
by and through
MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY, his Father,

Petitioner,

vs.

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her capacity
as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit
in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida,

Respondent.

On Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit

Petition for Writ of Certiorari

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

First, whether the *Younger* doctrine was impermissibly invoked by the District Court to abstain from exercising its jurisdiction over Petitioner's §1983 action seeking a declaration that Florida Statute §61.30(12) invidiously discriminated against Petitioner based solely upon his status as a child born of a subsequent marriage and thus the Eleventh Circuit's affirming of the District Court's abstention under *Younger* resulted in decision that (i) is in conflict with the decision of another United States court of appeals, (ii) has decided an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court, and (iii) that conflicts with relevant decisions of this Court?

Second, whether the Eleventh Circuit's affirmance of the District Court's dismissal and abstention after denying leave to Petitioner to amend even once his §1983 complaint for declaratory relief (i) so far departed from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings and/or sanctioned such a departure by a lower court as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and (ii) decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with relevant decisions of this Court?

Third, whether the "Do Not Publish" Rule of the Eleventh Circuit conflicts with the holding of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth and Fifth Circuits and that such a rule is inconsistent with the doctrine of *Stare Decisis* and thus departs from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and raises an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Questions Presented i

Table of Authorities iv

Opinions Below 1

Jurisdiction 1

Constitutional Provisions, Treaties, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations Involved 2

Statement of the Case 2

Reason for Granting the Writ 7

I. Petitioner's Equal Protection and Due Process Violation Claim 7

II. The Eleventh Circuit's Affirmance of the District Court's Abstention under *Younger* Is in Conflict with the Decision of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and Has Decided an Important Question of Federal Law That Has Not Been, but Should Be, Settled by this Court and Additionally Conflicts with Relevant Decisions of this Court .....

A. *Younger* Does Not Require Petitioner to Intervene in the State Proceedings .....

B. This Court Must Settle the Implication of the Federal

Courts Improvement Act of 1996 on the Scope of *Younger* .....

C. The Eleventh Circuit's Decision Conflicts With Relevant Decisions of this Court .....

III. Petitioner Was Denied An Opportunity to Amend The Complaint 14

IV. The "Do Not Publish" Decision of the Eleventh Circuit Violates *Stare Decisis* 17

Conclusion 21

Table of Authorities

Cases

Anastasoff v. United States, 223 F.3d 898 (8th Cir. 2000), *vacated*, 235 F.3d 1054 (8th Cir. 2000) 22-23

Ankenbrandt v. Richards, 504 U.S. 689, 706 (1992) . 15, 25

Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41, 48 (1957) 18

Foman v. Davis, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962) 18, 20

Gomez v. Perez, 409 U.S. 535 (1973) 10

Hice v. Pace, 675 So.2d 952 (Fla.App. 1st Dist. 1996) . . . 17

Hoover v. Wagner, 47 F.3d 845, 848 (7th Cir. 1995) . . . 13

James B. Beam Distilling Co. v. Georgia, 501 U.S. 529 (1991) 22

Lone Star Motor Import v. Citroen Cars, 288 F.2d 69, 75 (5th Cir. 1961) 18

Marbury v. Madison, 5 U.S. 137 (1803) 21

Middlesex County Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Assoc., 457 U.S. 423, 432 (1982) 15

Miller-Bent v. Miller-Bent, 680 So.2d 1119 (Fla.App. 1st Dist.

1996) 17

Planned Parenthood v. Casey 505 U.S. 833 (1992) .. 23-24

Pohlmann v. Pohlmann, 703 So. 2d 1121 (5th DCA 1997)

..... 11, 17

P.O.P.S. v. Gardner, 998 F.2d 764 (9th Cir. 1993) 9, 20

Robinson v. Robinson, 657 So.2d 958 (Fla.App. 1st Dist. 1995)

..... 17

Sibbach v. Wilson, 312 U.S. 1 (1941) 14

State Dept. of Revenue on Behalf of Powell v. Feeney, 689 So.2d

350 (Fla.App. 2nd Dist. 1997) 17

Trainor v. Hernandez, 431 U.S. 434 (1977) 15

Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co., 406 U.S. 164, 175

(1972) 11

Williams v. Dallas Area Rapid Transit, 256 F.3d 260 (5th Cir.

2001) 23

Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37 (1971) 12-17

Other Authorities

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 1 13

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 5 13

28 U.S.C. §1653 18

28 U.S.C §2072(b) 14

42 U.S.C. §1983 13-14

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a) 18

Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2 23-24

Report by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on §311 13

Florida Statute §61.30(12) 9-12

Justice Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* §377-78 (1983) 22

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

Petitioner, Alexander Blair Sibley, a minor, by and through Montgomery Blair Sibley, his Father and counsel, prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment and opinion of the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit entered February 20, 2004.

OPINIONS BELOW

The May 19, 2003, order of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida dismissing the complaint is found at *Appendix-20.*

The February 20, 2004, opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirming the dismissal of the complaint is found at *Appendix-32.*

The March 31, 2004, order denying Petitioner's motion to publish of the United State Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit is found at *Appendix-35.*

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit was entered on February 20, 2004. A timely filed motion for rehearing was denied on March 31, 2004. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. §1254(1).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, TREATIES, STATUTES, ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS INVOLVED

(Set-out in Appendix)

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 1
U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 5
28 U.S.C. §1653
28 U.S.C. §2072(b)
42 U.S.C. §1983
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a)
Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2
Florida Statute §61.30(12)

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

In the summer of 1994, a petition for dissolution of marriage was filed in Florida by Barbara Sibley against Petitioner's Father ("Father"). A final judgment of dissolution was granted on September 20, 1994, between them in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19. Of that marriage, three children were born: Margaret Sibley, Elizabeth Sibley and Montgomery Sibley, Jr.

Three years later in 1997, Petitioner was born of the marriage of Father and his second wife, Svetlana Sibley.

At a hearing held July 13, 2001, to address modifying Father's financial obligations to his children of the first marriage, Respondent announced her understanding of her constitutional obligation to children born of a second marriage stating:

I find that his argument that he now has a

> fourth child so he can't pay his daughter's tuition to be something that the Court is rejecting. Seven years ago he signed an agreement, he seems to be somebody who understands what agreements are about, and I do still consider, well, God bless all persons coming to this world, the conception of a child to be a volunteer act and a knowing act in somebody of Mr. Sibley's intelligence. So I assume somebody of intelligence such as Mr. Sibley wouldn't have another child unless he could afford to, and unless he did so understanding completely his responsibilities to his other children, who he says he love just as much as this new one. So I have to reject that argument as being illogical in light of the court's knowledge of the parties, their education and their station in life. . . For all of those reasons the Court certainly will compel that Mr. Sibley comply and pay this tuition. (Emphasis added).

Father on August 7, 2001, appealed to the Florida Third District Court of Appeal Respondent's orders of July 13 and 24, 2001, specifically raising on behalf of Petitioner the issue of the equal protection violation of Petitioner's rights as articulated by the dissent in *Pohlmann v. Pohlmann*, 703 So. 2d 1121 (5th DCA 1997). That appeal was assigned Case Number 3D01-2173. Some 232 days later, on March 27, 2002, the Florida Third District Court of Appeals affirmed the Respondent's orders in Case Number 3D01-2173 with an opinion which affirmed *per curiam* without written explanation and which thus ignored completely the substance of Father's equal protection arguments on behalf of Petitioner. Father's motion for reconsideration, rehearing and

clarification in Case Number 3D01-2173 was subsequently denied *per curiam* without opinion on May 29, 2002.

In the interim, on August 4, 2001, Father filed his Supplemental Petition for Modification of Child Support in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19. That supplemental petition sought relief from the terms of the Marital Settlement Agreement between the Father and Barbara Sibley that (i) Father pay $4000/month in support for his first three children and (ii) Father pay all the educational expenses of his first three children. The basis for the Supplemental Petition was that due to Father's inability to secure employment as an attorney and the birth of Petitioner by a subsequent marriage, there had been a sufficient, material, involuntary and permanent in nature change in his financial circumstances warranting a modification. Significantly, Father again raised the issue of equal protection on behalf of Petitioner stating in that Supplemental Petition "Additionally, [Father] has fathered another child who must be accorded equal protection under the laws and constitution of the State of Florida and the U.S. Constitution to a proportionate share of [Father]'s financial obligations."

In January, 2002, Barbara Sibley filed two motions for contempt against Father relating to enforcement of the Marital Settlement Agreement between them for child support. The first sought payment of $4,000/month in child support from July 2000 until the present pursuant to the terms of the Martial Settlement Agreement between them. The second motion for contempt sought enforcement of the terms of the Marital Settlement Agreement between them which required that Father to pay 100% of his first three children's educational expenses.

On August 5, 2002, Respondent signed orders granting Barbara Sibley's motions for contempt. As to the order on child support, Respondent adopted Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings *verbatim* and – ignoring both Petitioner's existence and financial needs – ordered Father (i) to pay $100,000 for past due child support, (ii) remain current on his child support of $4,000 per month thereafter and then found that Father "at all times from May 2000 had the present financial ability to pay but willfully or intentionally failed and refused to do so and wilfully violated the Order of this Court." Respondent then sentenced Father to Ninety (90) days in the Miami-Dade County Jail beginning January 1, 2003, unless he paid the specified amounts by December 1, 2002. In the child support order, the Respondent adopted Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings verbatim and based her conclusion of Father's "ability to pay" upon "her" *non-sequitur* findings that: Father's 1994 financial affidavit showed a net income of $3,460/month; his 1998 financial affidavit showed a net income of -$1,435 and a net negative net worth of -$57,400; his 1999 financial affidavit showed a net income of $2,918/month and a negative net worth of -$121,900; his present gross income was $37,500 annually from his employment: From these facts, Father was to pay exclusively for the benefit of the three children of his first marriage $48,000/year - 133% of his gross annual income.

As to the order on the children's educational expenses, Respondent again adopted verbatim Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings and (i) sentenced Father to be incarcerated for Ninety (90) days in the Dade County Jail beginning November 1, 2002, (ii) provided that Father may purge the incarceration order by paying $174,866.31 within sixty (60) days of the date of the order and (iii) allowing Father to make a motion to Respondent to have the Children's Trusts pay for the past, present and future educational expenses of the children in

order to discharge Father's obligations.

On November 22, 2003, Respondent incarcerated Father pursuant to the child support order. On December 23, 2003, two judges of the Florida Third District Court of Appeals entered the majority opinion in *Sibley v. Sibley*, Case No. 3D02-3171, 833 So.2d 847 (Fla. 3d DCA 2002) affirming Father's incarceration "for indirect contempt," holding remarkably that (i) "the record shows substantial assets, although admittedly not in the purge amount, in his [Father's] own name", and (ii) Father "may command, simply by asking, the payment of the purge amount through his very wealthy father. . ." That holding was the subject of Father's petitions for certiorari denied by this Court in Cases Numbered 03-370 and 03-682.

On July 15, 2003, Petitioner filed this action below, which sought solely a declaration from the District Court that Petitioner's rights secured by the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses were violated by the Respondent in her state judicial capacity by:

a. Respondent's orders on child support;

b. Respondent's application of Florida Statute §61.30(12) and Florida case law interpreting that statute in her child support orders which required her to ignore Petitioner's existence in setting and enforcing Father's child support obligations to the children of his first marriage; and

c. Respondent's position that Florida law permits children born of a second marriage to be treated differently than children born of a first marriage in determining child support obligations of their parents. *Appendix-3-4.*

On May 19, 2003, the District Court both dismissed the complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction under the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine and abstained from accepting jurisdiction under the *Younger* doctrine. *Appendix-20.* Remarkably, the District Court also denied to Petitioner leave to amend his complaint based upon the prior litigation history of Petitioner's Father. *Appendix-17.*

On February 20, 2004, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the abstention by the District Court under the *Younger* doctrine, and did not address the *Rooker-Feldman* dismissal. Additionally, ignoring the flagrant *ad-hominem* denial of Petitioner's motion to amend the compliant by the District Court, the Eleventh Circuit concluded that such amendment would be "futile" and hence it was not an abuse of discretion to deny Petitioner leave to amend the complaint. *Appendix-33.* Last, that opinion was marked "Do Not Publish" pursuant to Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2. Petitioner promptly moved to publish the decision raising constitutional arguments. On March 31, 2004, that motion was denied by the Eleventh Circuit. *Appendix*-35.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

There are five compelling reason for granting this writ:

First, the judicially-created *Younger* doctrine cannot be extended to require that Petitioner intervene in the Florida State Court proceedings to secure his Federal Constitutional and Congressionally secured civil rights to equal protection and due process as the Eleventh Circuit required here.

Second, in 1996, Congress amended 42 U.S.C. §1983 thus limiting the scope of the *Younger* doctrine.

Third, the Eleventh Circuit's decision conflicts with decisions of this Court which require that an adequate state remedy be available to Petitioner before *Younger* can be invoked to avoid Federal jurisdiction – an element plainly lacking here.

Fourth, by prohibiting Petitioner from any opportunity to amend his complaint, Petitioner had his rights secured by 28 U.S.C. §1653 and the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a) shamefully trespassed upon by both the District Court and the Eleventh Circuit.

Last, the fundamental notion of *stare decisis* prohibits the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals from issuing "Do Not Publish" decisions just as that same notion would prohibit this Court from adopting a similar procedure.

I. Petitioner's Fourteenth Amendment Violation Claim

The essence of Petitioner's Equal Protection and Due Process claim pursuant to the Fourteenth Amendment and §1983 is that the State of Florida – through Respondent and Florida Statute §61.30(12) – invidiously discriminates against children of subsequent marriages by denying those children the same level of financial support as Florida requires to be given to children of a prior marriage.

Only one other federal circuit court has addressed the issue of equal protection and state statutes setting child support obligations. In *P.O.P.S. v. Gardner*, 998 F.2d 764 (9th Cir. 1993), the court affirmed a dismissal of a constitutional challenge to a Washington state child support schedule which – similar to Florida's scheme found at §61.30(12) – excluded subsequently born children of other relationships in determining the level of child support to be ordered. *Id.* at 769.

In upholding the constitutionality of the child support schedule against an equal protection challenge, the Ninth Circuit held that the "schedule does not directly and substantially interfere with fundamental rights". *Id.* at 770. However, unlike Florida Statute §61.30(12), the Washington State schedule expressly required the courts to consider and if necessary deviate from the schedule if children from other relationships were present. *Id.* at 769.

Notably, Florida does not permit such a deviation, expressly prohibiting such consideration at §61.30(12)(c): "The issue of subsequent children under paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) may only be raised in a proceeding for an upward modification of an existing award and may not be

applied to justify a decrease in an existing award." (Emphasis added).

This Court must look to a directly analogous determination of equal protection guarantees found at *Gomez v. Perez*, 409 U.S. 535 (1973) in evaluating Petitioner's claim. There, this Court addressed the issue of "whether the laws of Texas may constitutionally grant legitimate children a judicially enforceable right to support from their natural fathers and at the same time deny that right to illegitimate children." *Id.* at 535. This Court first found that "the controlling law is the Texas common-law rule that illegitimate children, unlike legitimate children, have no legal right to support from their fathers." *Id.* at 536-537. In striking down the quoted law of Texas, this Court held:

> Under these decisions, a State may not invidiously discriminate against illegitimate children by denying them substantial benefits accorded children generally. We therefore hold that once a State posits a judicially enforceable right on behalf of children to needed support from their natural fathers - there is no constitutionally sufficient justification for denying such an essential right to a child simply because its natural father has not married its mother. For a State to do so is "illogical and unjust." *Id.*, at 175, 92 S.Ct., at 1406.

Id. at 537-538.

Here, Florida has established a statutory right for children of a first marriage to needed support but explicitly has denied children – whose only crime was to be

subsequently born of one different parent – the same right to needed support. For Florida to do this is "illogical and unjust".

Indeed, if Petitioner had been born out-of-wedlock – which he was not – *Gomez* would have precluded the disparate treatment Florida sets at §61.30(12). Subsequently born children do not need less food than the prior born children. However, that is plainly what the public policy of the State of Florida mandates by §61.30(12)(c) generally and in this case specifically.

In *Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co.*, 406 U.S. 164, 175 (1972) this Court noted "the basic concept of our system [is] that legal burdens should bear some relationship to individual responsibility or wrongdoing. Obviously, no child is responsible for his birth and penalizing the illegitimate child is an ineffectual—as well as unjust—way of deterring the parent." Here, it is the child born of a second marriage that is being penalized the same way an illegitimate child was being penalized in *Weber*.

In *Pohlmann v. Pohlmann*, 703 So. 2d 1121 (5th DCA 1997) the only Florida case which has addressed and upheld this issue of the constitutionality of §61.30(12), in his well-worded dissent, Judge Harris stated "The issue in this case, quite simply, is whether it is a 'legitimate government interest' for the State, through its legislative process, to prefer certain children over others. Because I believe that it is not, I would hold §61.30(12), Florida Statutes, unconstitutional under the provisions of Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution."

Accordingly, Petitioner has a valid claim for which Congress through §1983 has provided a remedy in Federal

District Court.

II. The Eleventh Circuit's Affirmance of the District Court's Abstention under *Younger* Is in Conflict with the Decision of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and Has Decided an Important Question of Federal Law That Has Not Been, but Should Be, Settled by this Court and Additionally Conflicts with Relevant Decisions of this Court

A. *Younger* Does Not Require Petitioner to Intervene in the State Proceedings

Petitioner – a six year old boy – is not a party to any on-going Florida State proceeding, nor could he be under the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure. Indeed, subsequent to the filing of the complaint, Petitioner sought to intervene in the Florida Family Court proceeding between Father and Father's first ex-wife to assert his right to support from Father acquired under the divorce degree between Father and Father's second ex-wife entered in Maryland in June 2003. This attempted intervention by Petitioner the Florida Family Court refused to permit. *Appendix-30.*

Accordingly, by approving the District Court's invocation of the *Younger* doctrine, the Eleventh Circuit has expressly held that Petitioner's must intervene and can only pursue his §1983 claim in Florida State Court. Yet, as the Florida State Court order plainly states, "The Motion to Intervene on behalf of [Petitioner] Alexander Blair Sibley be and the same is hereby DENIED". *Appendix-31.* As such, *Younger* has now been used to completely deny to Petitioner any forum to assert his claim.

The Eleventh Circuit's holding in this regard expressly conflicts with the Seventh Circuit's holding in *Hoover v. Wagner*, 47 F.3d 845, 848 (7th Cir. 1995): "[N]othing in *Younger* or the cases following it suggests that persons claiming a violation of their federal rights have an obligation before turning to federal court to see whether there is some state court proceeding that they might join in order to present their federal claims there."

Wherefore, this Court must accept certiorari as the decision of the Eleventh Circuit in this matter is in direct conflict with the decision of the Seventh Circuit court of appeals. Moreover, this Court should decided the important question of federal law regarding *Younger's* requiring intervention in a state court proceeding that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court as *Younger* is being utilized to deny access to any court for redress of constitutional grievances.

B. This Court Must Settle the Implication of the Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996 on the Scope of *Younger*

Congress, pursuant to its authority found in the Fourteenth Amendment, Section 5, enacted §311 of the Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996 and thereby amended 42 U.S.C. §1983 to specifically include authority for a declaratory judgment action against a judge such as Petitioner has brought here. ("... [E]xcept that in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable. *Appendix-37*). As stated in the Report by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on §311,

"[m]oreover, litigants may still seek declaratory relief, and may obtain injunctive relief if a declaratory decree is violated or is otherwise unavailable."

As such, given the supremacy of the Rules Enabling Act found at 28 U.S.C §2072(b), the *Younger/Trainor* doctrine in a §1983 action no longer has vitality by reason of this Congressional action.

Patently, the Rules Enabling Act by its terms forbids Court rules – here *Younger* through *Trainor* – to "abridge, enlarge, or modify" any substantive right. As this Court noted in *Sibbach v. Wilson*, 312 U.S. 1 (1941), the federal courts, in adopting rules, were not free to extend or restrict the jurisdiction conferred by a statute. *Id.*, at 10.

Thus to employ *Younger* (1971) and *Trainor* (1977) to restrict access to Federal District Court as expressly provided by the subsequently enacted §311 of the Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996, clearly "abridges" Petitioner's substantive rights under the 1996 amendment to 42 U.S.C. §1983. As such, the District Court was prohibited from abstaining by Congressional action which voided the *Younger/Trainor* doctrine.

Accordingly, as the Eleventh Circuit by its affirmance of the District Court's abstention under *Younger* has decided the important question of the scope of *Younger* post-§311 of the Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996, this Court must decided this important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court in order to discharge its obligation pursuant to 28 U.S.C §2072(b) to harmonize its judicially-created *Younger* doctrine with the subsequently enacted and conflicting amendment to §1983.

C. The Eleventh Circuit's Decision Conflicts With Relevant Decisions of this Court

The *Younger* doctrine arises from this Court's holding in *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971) in which the plaintiff sought a federal injunction to bar a state criminal prosecution. Two grounds for *Younger* abstention were laid out by this Court: interference with state actions and notions of "comity".

In *Trainor v. Hernandez*, 431 U.S. 434 (1977), this Court extended the doctrine to include federal declaratory actions under 42 U.S.C. §1983, but, only under limited circumstances. *Trainor* recognized that abstention was inappropriate when, "extraordinary circumstances were present warranting federal interference or unless their state remedies were inadequate to litigate their federal due process claim" *Id.* at 446.

This holding was further refined in the pre-§311 of the Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996 case of *Middlesex County Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Assoc.*, 457 U.S. 423, 432 (1982), where this Court set out three benchmarks to guide the application of *Younger* abstention: "first, do state bar disciplinary hearings within the constitutionally prescribed jurisdiction of the State Supreme Court constitute an ongoing state judicial proceeding; second, do the proceedings implicate important state interests; and third, is there an adequate opportunity in the state proceedings to raise constitutional challenges." *Id.* at 432.

Most recently, in *Ankenbrandt v. Richards*, 504 U.S. 689, 706 (1992), this Court noted, "In this case, there is no allegation by respondents of any pending state proceedings, and Ankenbrandt contends that such proceedings ended prior

to her filing this lawsuit. Absent any pending proceeding in state tribunals, therefore, application by the lower courts of *Younger* abstention was clearly erroneous."

First, those "extraordinary circumstances" here are the manner in which the State of Florida treats the right of children of subsequent marriages to support from their parents in direct conflict with this Court's holdings as outline in detail *supra* in Point I. In the instant case as alleged in the Complaint, this includes that Father pay "over 100% of his annual income to support the first three children of Father thereby leaving nothing from Father for [Petitioner]'s support." *(Appendix-10, ¶24)*. Moreover, had leave been granted to Father under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15, to amend the complaint, he would have additionally alleged, that Respondent incarcerated Petitioner for 75 days without any regard to the rights of Petitioner to enjoy support from his Father during that time.

Second, there are no "pending proceedings" in Florida State court to which Petitioner is a party – indeed, leave to intervene in those proceedings has been denied to Petitioner. *Appendix-30*.

Third, Petitioner has no "adequate opportunity in the state proceedings to raise constitutional challenges." Indeed, as made clear by the Florida Family Court, Father attempted to raise the issue "that [Petitioner] Alexander Blair Sibley was being denied equal protection of the law by the rulings of this Court with regard to child support due and owing to the three (3) children of Respondent/Former Husband's marriage to Petitioner/Former Wife. Respondent/Former Husband's issue was rejected by this Court's predecessor, which ruling was affirmed on appeal." *Appendix-30*. Thus, the Florida Family Court ruled that "[t]he Motion to Intervene on behalf of [Petitioner] Alexander Blair Sibley be and the same is hereby

DENIED." *Appendix-31.* Clearly, Petitioner has no such "opportunity".

Last, the statutory scheme of Florida Statute §61.30(12) expressly prevents Respondent from considering Petitioner when determining Father's obligation to pay child support to his first three children. Indeed, every Florida court to address the issue has concurred that Florida Statute §61.30(12) is constitutional. *See*: *Robinson v. Robinson*, 657 So.2d 958 (Fla.App. 1st Dist. 1995); *Pohlmann v. Pohlmann*, 703 So. 2d 1121 (Fla.App. 5th Dist. 1997); *State Dept. of Revenue on Behalf of Powell v. Feeney*, 689 So.2d 350 (Fla.App. 2nd Dist. 1997); *Miller-Bent v. Miller-Bent*, 680 So.2d 1119 (Fla.App. 1st Dist. 1996); *Hice v. Pace*, 675 So.2d 952 (Fla.App. 1st Dist. 1996). As such, Petitioner has no opportunity to raise this issue of the constitutionality of Florida Statute §61.30(12) in the Florida State court and thus *Younger* cannot be applied as there is no "adequate forum" to litigate Petitioner's Equal Protection claim.

In sum, as the Eleventh Circuit's decision affirming the District Court's abstention under *Younger* conflicts with this Court's holding in *Younger, Trainor, Middlesex County* and *Ankenbrandt*, this Court is required to exercise its jurisdiction to resolve this conflict as the Eleventh Circuit's decision ignores the absence of those necessary elements this Court requires before *Younger* abstention may be invoked.

III. Petitioner Was Denied An Opportunity to Amend The Complaint

To the extent there is some pleading defect in the complaint, this Court must take note that at the oral argument before the District Court on August 27, 2003, Petitioner made an *ore tenus* motion for leave to amend to address any such supposed deficiencies in the complaint which motion was

denied by the District Court. *Appendix -17.* This denial was particularly onerous as Petitioner had a right to amend once as a matter of right pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a), which right the District Court denied to him. ("A party may amend the party's pleading once as a matter of course at any time before a responsive pleading is served . . .". Here, no responsive pleading as defined by Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 7(a) had been served by Respondent at the time of the oral argument on August 27, 2003.)

Additionally, on appeal, Petitioner sought from the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals an opportunity to amend his complaint, which that court denied, stating "Plaintiff contends that the court abused its discretion in denying him leave to amend his complaint. We find no abuse of discretion; an amendment would be futile." *Appendix-32.* As detailed above, an amendment would not have been "futile", given the foreclosure of to Petitioner of any remedy in Florida State Court.

Without question, the policy of the federal rules is to permit liberal amendment to facilitate determination of claims on the merits and to prevent litigation from becoming a technical exercise in the fine points of pleading. *See, e. g.*, *Foman v. Davis*, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962); *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 48 (1957). Thus, unless there is a substantial reason to deny leave to amend, the discretion of the district court is not broad enough to permit denial. See: 28 U.S.C. §1653; *Lone Star Motor Import v. Citroen Cars*, 288 F.2d 69, 75 (5th Cir. 1961).

Here, remarkably, that "substantial reason" as articulated by the District Court in denying Petitioner's request was simply irrelevant and, appallingly and grotesquely, *ad hominem*:

[Counsel for Respondent]: [Petitioner] not complied with the Florida Statute that requires notice to the Attorney General and various other things that need to be filed that would allow the Attorney General to intervene as the Attorney General and to defend the constitutionality of this statute.

Judge Huck: That's the first I have heard of this argument. I did not view this complain as a general attack on the -- on section 61.30(12). Appears when you look at the overall allegations of the complaint this is really an attack on Judge Lando's orders.

[Counsel for Respondent]: That's the way I read it too, Your Honor.

[Counsel for Petitioner]: May I respond.

Judge Huck: Yes, sir.

[Counsel for Petitioner]: To the extent the Court is leaning that way I would ask under the liberal pleading rules that I have leave to be more specific in that this is a general attack on this particular statute and its Constitutionality.

Judge Huck: I am not inclined to do that. I cannot ignore your history in this Court and in the State Courts. Frankly, while I do not think it's appropriate to enter an order restricting your ability to file lawsuits I think it's within my discretion to allow you to amend the complaint, and I'm going to deny that.

Appendix-17. Even if Father has a "history" in the federal and state courts, that is certainly no reason to visit the sins of the Father on his Son, Petitioner. Accordingly, if a pleading defect alone is the reason to deny certiorari here, then Petitioner must be afforded an opportunity to amend the complaint to more clearly state his cause of action.

Moreover, as stated above, permitting Petitioner to amend the complaint would have allowed Petitioner to allege (i) his denial of an available remedy in Florida state court thus precluding *Younger* abstention and (ii) allegations which more closely aligned with those in *P.O.P.S. v. Gardner*, *supra*, in which the Plaintiff there successfully brought a constitutional challenge in Federal District Court to a state child support statutory scheme just as Petitioner here was attempting to do. To hold otherwise, simply closes the courthouse door to Petitioner and is a gross "abuse of that discretion and inconsistent with the spirit of the Federal Rules." *Foman*, *supra* at 182.

Finally, the Eleventh Circuit, by holding that "We find no abuse of discretion; an amendment would be futile", has set a new standard for permitting amendments to pleadings. *Appendix-34.* That standard substitutes the all-knowing judgement of the District Court and Circuit Court against permitting a litigant to amend – just once – his pleading. Such an amendment of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure deserves review here – particularly when the District Court invoked an *ad hominem* rationale to deny any amendment.

Wherefore, the Eleventh Circuit's affirming of the District Court's denial of leave to Petitioner to amend his complaint (i) so far departed from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings and/or sanctioned such a departure by a lower court as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and (ii) decided an important

federal question – permission to amend a complaint once as a matter of right – in a way that conflicts with relevant decisions of this Court.

IV. The "Do Not Publish" Decision of the Eleventh Circuit Violates *Stare Decisis*

Invoking Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2, the Eleventh Circuit's opinion in this matter was ordered as "Do Not Publish". Appendix-35 *infra*.

Rule 36-2 states "An opinion shall be unpublished unless a majority of the panel decides to publish it. Unpublished opinions are not considered binding precedent. They may be cited as persuasive authority, provided that a copy of the unpublished opinion is attached to or incorporated within the brief, petition, motion or response in which such a citation is made."

Rule 36-2 and it use in this matter, (i) conflicts with the holding of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and Fifth Circuit, (ii) departs from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and (iii) raises an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court.

In *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. 137 (1803) this Court recognized that inherent in every judicial decision was a declaration and interpretation of the relevant general principles of law. "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases, must of necessity expound and interpret that rule." *Id.* at 177.

Fundamental to this decision making process was that

the enunciated law be subsequently applied to subsequently similarly situated litigants. *James B. Beam Distilling Co. v. Georgia*, 501 U.S. 529 (1991). "But selective prospectivity also breaches the principle that litigants in similar situations should be treated the same, a fundamental component of *stare decisis* and the rule of law generally." *Id.* at 544.

Indeed, this principle of reliance upon enunciated precedent is at the backbone of our legal system. As most eloquently stated by Justice Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* §377-78 (1983): "A more alarming doctrine could not be promulgated by any American court, than that it was at liberty to disregard all former rules and decisions, and to decide for itself, without reference to the settled course of antecedent principles."

Here, the use of "Do Not Publish" is the very "alarming doctrine" of which Justice Story speaks. By designating the opinion below "Do Not Publish", the Eleventh Circuit has permitted itself the ability (i) to ignore its relevant prior "Do Not Publish" opinions in deciding this matter and (ii) ignore this opinion when a similarly situated matter occurs in the future. Plainly, such power violates the "fundamental component of *stare decisis* and the rule of law generally." *James B. Beam Distilling Co.* at 544.

In *Anastasoff v. United States*, 223 F.3d 898 (8th Cir. 2000), *vacated*, 235 F.3d 1054 (8th Cir. 2000) (en banc), the court in addressing the constitutionality of its Rule 28A(i) – similar in effect to the Eleventh Circuit's Rule 36-2 – held:

> Federal courts, in adopting rules, are not free to extend the judicial power of the United States described in Article III of the Constitution. *Willy v. Coastal Corp.*, 503 U.S. 131, 135 (1992). The judicial power of the

> United States is limited by the doctrine of precedent. Rule 28A(i) allows courts to ignore this limit. If we mark an opinion as unpublished, Rule 28A(i) provides that is not precedent. . . . Rule 28A(i) expands the judicial power beyond the limits set by Article III by allowing us complete discretion to determine which judicial decisions will bind us and which will not. Insofar as it limits the precedential effect of our prior decisions, the Rule is therefore unconstitutional.

Id. at 905. Noteworthy is that the vacation *en banc* in *Anastasoff* was based upon the contested issue becoming moot, not upon a retreat from the holding contained in the original panel decision.

More recently, in *Williams v. Dallas Area Rapid Transit*, 256 F.3d 260 (5th Cir. 2001), three judges of the Fifth Circuit dissented from a denial of a petition for rehearing *en banc* based upon grounds that Fifth Circuit Rule 47.5.4 – an analog to Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2 – was unjustified, raised important questions involving equal protection and warranted full consideration by the Fifth Circuit *en banc*.

Finally, this Court has recognized the fundamental nature of *stare decisis* in maintaining the legitimacy of the judicial branch which has no external power to enforce its authority. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* 505 U.S. 833 (1992), Justice O'Connor, Justice Kennedy, and Justice Souter articulated the very essence of *stare decisis* and its necessity to the continued legitimacy of the judicial branch of government:

> The root of American governmental power is revealed most clearly in the instance of the power conferred by the Constitution upon the Judiciary of the United States and specifically

> upon this Court. As Americans of each succeeding generation are rightly told, the Court cannot buy support for its decisions by spending money and, except to a minor degree, it cannot independently coerce obedience to its decrees. The Court's power lies, rather, in its legitimacy, a product of substance and perception that shows itself in the people's acceptance of the Judiciary as fit to determine what the Nation's law means and to declare what it demands. . . That substance is expressed in the Court's opinions, and our contemporary understanding is such that a decision without principled justification would be no judicial act at all.

Here, by permitting the Eleventh Circuit to issue its opinion "Do Not Publish", the legitimacy of that court is undermined as it is failing to "to determine what the Nation's law means and to declare what it demands". Instead, the "Do Not Publish" decisions – as here – are determined without reference to prior law and are exempt as binding precedent on future cases. Such a result is "no judicial act at all."

Accordingly, certiorari review under Rule 10(a) is appropriate as Rule 36-2 of the United States Court of Appeal for the Eleventh Circuit (i) conflicts with the holding of the United States Court of Appeals in *Anastasoff* and *Williams*, (ii) departs from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and (iii) raises an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court.

CONCLUSION

Petitioner here – a six year old boy – is denied by the State of Florida through its agent, Respondent, an equal share of the financial support Petitioner's Father has available for his four children. Instead, Florida mandates that the three children of Father's first marriage receive 133% of Father's income – an incarcerates Father when he cannot pay this absurd amount – thereby leaving neither financial nor *in personam* support for Petitioner from his Father. Moreover, the corrosive effect upon Petitioner is not limited to financial deprivations, for Petitioner is growing up wondering why he is being denied "substantial benefits accorded" to Father's first three children. *Gomez* at 537.

Petitioner has no venue in Florida State court to raise this claim. He has been denied recognition in and access to the state courts by Florida State court order. Even if permitted to raise his equal protection claim in Florida State Court, he would have it denied by reason of Florida Statute §61.30(12) and the cases holding that statute constitutional. Therefore, abstention under *Younger* was impermissible given that "[a]bstention from the exercise of federal jurisdiction is the exception, not the rule.. . . Abstention rarely should be invoked, because the federal courts have a virtually unflagging obligation . . . to exercise the jurisdiction given them. *Ankenbrandt v. Richards*, 504 U.S. 689, 705 (1992) (Citations omitted). Here, that plainly placed jurisdiction is found at §1983.

Moreover, for both the District Court and the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals to deny to Petitioner leave to amend his complaint (i) so far departed from the accepted and usual course of judicial proceedings and/or sanctioned such a departure by a lower court as to call for an exercise of this Court's supervisory power and (ii) decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with relevant cited

decisions of this Court.

Last, this Court would not entertain the notion that it could decide cases brought before it and then issue its decisions "Do Not Publish" for reasons so stark under the fundamental doctrine of *stare decisis* that it simply is inapposite to the settle rule of law to consider such a course. Accordingly, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals – a mini-Supreme Court in and of itself given this Court's annual acceptance of only 80-90 cases among the 8,000 filed each year – can no less discharge its obligation under *stare decisis* and continue to issue opinions "Do Not Publish".

WHEREFORE, Petitioner requests that this Petition for Certiorari be granted to review the issues raised herein.

Respectfully submitted,

Montgomery Blair Sibley
Counsel for Petitioner

(2)

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED

No. 03-1544 11 2004

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY, a minor,
by and through
MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY, his Father,

Petitioner,

vs.

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her capacity
as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit
in and for Miami- Dade County, Florida,

Respondent.

On Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit

Appendix to Petition for Writ of Certiorari

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CONTENTS OF APPENDIX

Complaint for Declaratory Relief *A-3*

The August 27, 2003, hearing transcript *A-14*

The May 19, 2003, order of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida dismissing the complaint *A-20*

The January 5, 2004, Order Denying Motion to Intervene by Petitioner, Alexander Blair Sibley in the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit in and for Dade County, Florida, Family Division, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19 ..... *A-30*

The February 20, 2004, opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirming the dismissal of the complaint *A-32*

The March 31, 2004, order denying Petitioner's motion to publish of the United State Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit *A-35*

Constitutional Provisions, Treaties, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations Involved

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 1 ..... *A-36*

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 5 ..... *A-36*

28 U.S.C. §1653 ..... *A-36*

28 U.S.C §2072(b) *A-36*

42 U.S.C. §1983 ..... *A-37*

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a) *A-37*

Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2 . . . . . *A-38*

Florida Statute §61.30(12) *A-38*

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Case. No.03-21885-CV-PCH

ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY, a minor,
by and through MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY,
his Father,

Plaintiff,

vs.

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her capacity
as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th
Judicial Circuit in And For Miami- Dade
County, Florida,

Defendant.
_____/

COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY RELIEF

Introduction

1. By this lawsuit, Plaintiff seeks a declaratory judgment that his rights secured by the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause, Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution and Florida law as enunciated by the Florida Supreme Court in *St. Mary's Hospital, Inc. v. Phillipe*, 769 So. 2d 961, 971 (Fla. 2000) and *Palm Harbor Special Fire Control Dist. v. Kelly*, 516 So. 2d 249, 251 (Fla.2000) were violated by:

a. the Defendant's orders on child support of July

13, 2001and August 5, 2002 in t' e Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19;

b. the Defendant's application of Florida Statute §61.30(12) and Florida case law interpreting that statute in her orders of July 13, 2001and August 5, 2002 in Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19; and

c the Defendant's position that Florida law permits children born of a second marriage to be treated differently than children born of a first marriage in determining child support payments.

Jurisdiction And Venue

2. Jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §1331, §1343(3) and (4), §2201 and §2202 and 42 U.S.C. §1983.

3. Venue in this district is proper under 28 U.S.C. §1391(a)(1) and (2).

Parties

4. Plaintiff, Alexander Blair Sibley is a resident of the State of Maryland, a minor and the fourth child of Montgomery Blair Sibley ("Father").

5. Defendant, Maxine Cohen Lando, is a resident of Miami-Dade County, Florida and is sued at present only in her capacity as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida.

General Allegations

6. In the summer of 1994, a petition for dissolution of marriage was filed in Florida circuit court by Barbara Sibley against Father. A final judgment of dissolution was granted on September 20, 1994, between Father and Barbara Sibley in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19.

7. Of that marriage, three children were born: Margaret Sibley, Elizabeth Sibley and Montgomery Sibley, Jr.

8. On July 16, 1994, Father's mother, Beatrice Blair, died. Pursuant to her last will and testament, three pour-overs trust were created for three of her grandchildren, Margaret Sibley, Elizabeth Sibley and Montgomery Sibley, Jr. ("the Children's Trusts"). Father was appointed Trustee of the Children's Trusts pursuant to a Letter of Trusteeship issued by the a Surrogate Judge of the County of New York on August 24, 1995.

9. On December 30, 1997, Plaintiff was born of the marriage of Father and his wife, Svetlana Sibley.

10. On January 29, 2001, the Defendant entered an order appointing Dirk Lorenzen as attorney *ad litem* for the first three children of Father. On May 4, 2001, Lorenzen filed "Children's Motion to Compel Immediate Payment of Child Support and Education Expenses *Pendente Lite*", representing to this Court that he was the "Attorney for the Children".

11. On July 4, 2001, Lorenzen noticed this motion for July 13, 2001, before the Defendant. At the hearing on July 13, 2001, the Defendant heard and ruled upon the "Children's Motion to Compel Immediate Payment of Child Support and Education Expenses *Pendente Lite*". On that day, the

Defendant issued an order. Subsequently, the Defendant entered an order of July 24, 2001, granting the May 4, 2001, motion as to the Margaret Harper Sibley. Both orders required Father to pay $15,600.00 in educational expenses of his first born child without reference to Father's other children.

12. This amount represented close to half of Father's yearly income at the time.

13. Significantly, at the hearing held July 13, 2001, the Defendant stated her understanding of her constitutional obligation to children born of a second marriage when she stated:

> I find that his argument that he now has a fourth child so he can't pay his daughter's tuition to be something that the Court is rejecting. Seven years ago he signed an agreement, he seems to be somebody who understands what agreements are about, and I do still consider, well, God bless all persons coming to this world, the conception of a child to be a volunteer act and a knowing act in somebody of Mr. Sibley's intelligence. So I assume somebody of intelligence such as Mr. Sibley wouldn't have another child unless he could afford to, and unless he did so understanding completely his responsibilities to his other children, who he says he love just as much as this new one. so I have to reject that argument as being illogical in light of the court's knowledge of the parties, their education and their station in life. . . . For all of those reasons the Court certainly will compel that Mr. Sibley comply and pay this

tuition.

14. Father on August 7, 2001, appealed to the Florida Third District Court of Appeals Defendant's orders of July 13 and 24, 2001, specifically raising the issue of the equal protection violation of Plaintiff's rights as articulated by the dissent in *Pohlmann v. Pohlmann*, 703 So. 2d 1121 (5th DCA 1997). That appeal was assigned Case Number 3D01-2173. Some 232 days later, on March 27, 2002, the Florida Third District Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court in Case Number 3D01-2173 with a brief slip opinion which affirmed *per curiam* without opinion and which ignored completely the substance of Father's equal protection arguments. Father's motion for reconsideration, rehearing and clarification in Case Number 3D01-2173 was subsequently denied *per curiam* without opinion on May 29, 2002.

15. On August 4, 2001, Father filed his Supplemental Petition for Modification of Child Support in Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, Case No.: 94-18177 FC 19. That supplemental petition sought relief from the terms of the Marital Settlement Agreement between the Father and Barbara Sibley that (i) Father pay $4000/month in support for his first three children and (ii) Plaintiff's Father pay all the educational expenses of his first three children. The basis for the Supplemental Petition was that due to Father's inability to secure employment as an attorney and the birth of Plaintiff by a subsequent marriage, there had been a sufficient, material, involuntary and permanent in nature change in his financial circumstances warranting a modification.

16. In January, 2002, Barbara Sibley filed two motions for contempt against Father relating to enforcement of the Marital Settlement Agreement between them for child support. The

first sought payment of $4,000/month in child support from July 2000 until the present pursuant to the terms of the Martial Settlement Agreement between them. The second motion for contempt sought enforcement of the terms of the Marital Settlement Agreement between them which required that Father to pay 100% of his first three children's educational expenses.

17. On June 4, 5, 6, 7 and July 1, 2002, the Defendant held a trial on these motions related to child support and modification of Plaintiff's Father's obligations under the Marital Settlement Agreement.

18. On August 5, 2002, the Defendant signed orders granting Barbara Sibley's motions for contempt. As to the order on child support, the Defendant adopted Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings *verbatim* and ordered Father (i) to pay $100,000 for past due child support and (ii) remain current on his child support of $4,000 per month thereafter. Next, the Defendant found that the Father "at all times from May 2000 had the present financial ability to pay but willfully or intentionally failed and refused to do so and wilfully violated the Order of this Court." The Court then sentenced Father to Ninety (90) days in the Dade County Jail beginning January 1, 2003, unless he paid the specified amounts by December 1, 2002. In the child support order, the Defendant adopted Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings *verbatim* and based her conclusion of Father's "ability to pay" upon "her" findings that: Father's 1994 financial affidavit showed a net income of $3,460/month; his 1998 financial affidavit showed a net income of -$1,435 and a net negative net worth of -$57,400; his 1999 financial affidavit showed a net income of $2,918/month and a negative net worth of -$121,900; his present gross income was $37,500 annually from his employment and his Plaintiff's mother's income was in excess

of $30,000/year.

19. As to the order on the children's educational expenses, the Defendant again adopted *verbatim* Barbara Sibley's counsel's findings and (i) sentenced Father to be incarcerated for Ninety (90) days in the Dade County Jail beginning November 1, 2002, (ii) provided that Father may purge the incarceration order by paying $174,866.31 within sixty (60) days of the date of the order and (iii) allowing Father to make a motion to the Defendant to have the Children's Trusts pay for the past, present and future educational expenses of the children in order to discharge Father's obligations.

20. On August 27, 2002, Father filed his notice of appeal of the above orders of August 5, 2002. That appeal has been assigned Case No.:3D02-2308 the Florida Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

21. In case No.:3D02-2308, the Florida Third Circuit Court of Appeals has refused to Father the ability to file a brief which allows him to competently raise the equal protection arguments herein by refusing to him an additional 25 pages for the initial brief on appeal.

22. The so-called "*Younger*" doctrine is not applicable to this matter. In *Middlesex County Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Assoc.*, 102 S. Ct. 2515, 2522-23 (1982), the Supreme Court set out three benchmarks to guide the application of *Younger* abstention: "first, do state bar disciplinary hearings within the constitutionally prescribed jurisdiction of the State Supreme Court constitute an ongoing state judicial proceeding; second, do the proceedings implicate important state interests; and third, is there an adequate opportunity in the state proceedings to raise constitutional challenges." Id. at 2521 (emphasis in original). Here, neither the first or third

benchmarks are present and as such *Younger* abstention is not warranted. First, there are no on-going state proceedings involving this Plaintiff as he is not a party to any court proceeding in Florida, nor could he be under the Florida rules of procedure. Second, the constitutional challenge to the support orders has been raised previously by Father and the Third District Court of Appeals ignored it and now practically precludes him from raising this issue competently by limited the size of his brief on appeal in that matter. Most importantly, the statutory scheme of Florida Statute §61.30(12) expressly prevents Defendant from considering Plaintiff when determining Father's obligation to pay child support and indeed, every Florida court to address the issue has concurred that Florida Statute §61.30(12) is constitutional. *See*: *Robinson v. Robinson*, 657 So.2d 958, 20 Fla. L. Weekly D1675,, (Fla.App. 1 Dist. 1995); *Pohlmann v. Pohlmann*, 703 So. 2d 1121 (5th DCA 1997); *State, Dept. of Revenue on Behalf of Powell v. Feeney*, 689 So.2d 350, 22 Fla. L. Weekly D453,, (Fla.App. 2 Dist. 1997); *Miller-Bent v. Miller-Bent*, 680 So.2d 1119, 21 Fla. L. Weekly D2252,, (Fla.App. 1 Dist. 1996); *Hice v. Pace*, 675 So.2d 952, 21 Fla. L. Weekly D866,, (Fla.App. 1 Dist. 1996). As such, Plaintiff has no opportunity to raise this issue in the state court so the *Younger* doctrine is inapplicable here.

First Claim for Relief

23. Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1 through 22 and incorporates them herein by reference.

24. Defendant violated Plaintiff's rights by issuing the above-referenced orders regarding child support in violation of the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution without considering Plaintiff's rights to

support from Father and ordering that Father pay over 100% of his annual income to support the first three children of Father thereby leaving nothing from Father for Plaintiff's support.

25. Plaintiff has been damaged thereby as the ability to support to which he is entitled from his Father has been eliminated.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court:

A. Assume jurisdiction of this action;

B. Declare that the Defendant has violated Plaintiff's rights under the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution by the actions described above;

C. Retain jurisdiction of this matter to enforce this declaratory degree if subsequently violated;

D. Awarding reasonable costs, disbursements and attorney fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §2088; and

E. Enter such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Second Claim for Relief

26. Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1 through 22 and incorporates them herein by reference.

27. Florida Statute §61.30(12) violates Plaintiff's rights as secured by the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution.

28. Plaintiff has been damaged thereby as the ability to

support to which he is entitled from his Father has been seriously hampered by the application of this statute to his Father's child support obligation to his first three children.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court:

A. Assume jurisdiction of this action;

B. Declare that the Defendant has violated Plaintiff's rights under the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution by the application of Florida Statute §61.30(12);

C. Retain jurisdiction of this matter to enforce this declaratory degree if subsequently violated;

D. Awarding reasonable costs, disbursements and attorney fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §2088; and

E. Enter such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Third Claim for Relief

29. Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1 through 22 and incorporates them herein by reference.

30. Defendant's statements made at the hearing held on July 13, 200, violated Plaintiff's rights as secured by the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause, Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution and the law as enunciated by the Florida Supreme Court in *St. Mary's Hospital, Inc. v. Phillipe*, 769 So. 2d 961, 971 (Fla. 2000) and *Palm Harbor Special Fire Control Dist. v. Kelly*, 516 So. 2d 249, 251 (Fla.1987) and the Supreme Court, *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1, 87 S.Ct. 1817, 18 L.Ed.2d 1010; *Skinner v. Oklahoma*, 316 U.S. 535, 62 S.Ct. 1110, 86 L.Ed. 1655; *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 45 S.Ct.

571, 69 L.Ed. 1070, *Griswold v. Connecticut* 381 U.S. 479, 484, 85 S.Ct. 1678, 1681, 14 L.Ed.2d 510 (1965), by treating Plaintiff differently than others similarly children with no rational basis for the difference in treatment when she ordered a level of support for children of Father's first marriage in gross disproportionality to the support she left for Plaintiff from Father's income.

31. Plaintiff has been damaged thereby as the ability to support to which he is entitled from his Father has been seriously hampered by the application of this statute to his Father's child support obligation to his first three children.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court:

A. Assume jurisdiction of this action;

B. Declare that the Defendant has violated Plaintiff's rights under the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Article I, § 2, of the Florida Constitution;

C. Retain jurisdiction of this matter to enforce this declaratory degree if subsequently violated;

D. Awarding reasonable costs, disbursements and attorney fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §2088; and

E. Enter such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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By:_____
Montgomery Blair Sibley
Fla. Bar No.: 725730

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
CASE NO. 03-21885

ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY,

Plaintiff

vs.

MAXINE COHEN LANDO,

Defendant

HEARING HELD 8-27-03
BEFORE THE HONORABLE PAUL HUCK

APPEARANCES:

FOR THE PLAINTIFF:
MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY,
Counselor at Law

FOR THE DEFENDANT:
STEPHANIE STAPLES CURD,
Assistant Attorney General

THE COURT: Be seated everyone. We're here in the matter of Sibley versus Lando. Case No. 03-21885. May I have your appearances, please.

MR. BLAIR SIBLEY: Good afternoon. Montgomery Blair Sibley on behalf of the plaintiff Alexander Sibley.

MS. STAPLES CURD: Stephanie Staples Curd from the Attorney General's Office on behalf of Judge Lando.

THE COURT: We're here on two matters. We're here on the defendant Lando's motion to dismiss and also a motion to restrict further filing by the plaintiff in this case.

Let me do this, let me ask Mr. Sibley, with regard to the motion to dismiss how is this case different from the prior case I had? This is the third case I have had. I know this case. You are appearing as the father, next of friend of Alexander Blair Sibley. It appears you are essentially asking this Court to act as a super Appellate Court with regard to any orders entered in the ongoing domestic relations matter before the State Court Judge.

MR. BLAIR SIBLEY: If that were so Your Honor then the Rooker Feldman doctrine would compel you to dismiss this case as well. I believe there is a distinction in this case. There is a general attack of the constitutionality of Florida Statute 6130, subdivision 12 that sets up a dual standard of support for children of -- in these states from children of a first marriage and children of a second marriage. This case is distinct from the preceding cases that dealt with specific orders. And not to admit but not to argue the super appellate conclusions this Court made in determining the absence of jurisdiction under Rooker Feldman, that is not the case here. This case is on four squares with Feldman itself where the Supreme Court recognized that an attack on the factual findings of a Judicial Court were not a proper basis for jurisdiction in a U.S. District Court.

However the attack by Feldman on the general constitutionality of the District of Colombia's Bar admission proceedings was appropriate jurisdiction for the District Court

and the matter was remanded for that very purpose. That is the same posture this case sits before Your Honor today. Florida has a statute -- Florida discriminates between children depending upon their order of birth and their parentage which is not permissible. So this case is different because they're different in the nature of the allegations.

THE COURT: Would you like to respond to that limited argument?

MS. STAPLES CURD: The claim he's making reference to is the second claim for relief on page 8 and 9 of the complaint. He has not pled a Constitutional attack in the second claim for relief. It's not within the four corners of the relief. He makes that argument in –

THE COURT: That's what I am trying to find out. I thought you could help if he did identify that. He does refer to Florida Statue 61.3012.

MS. STAPLES CURD: He's asking they declare what the defendant did violated the plaintiff's rights. He doesn't ask the Court to declare it unconstitutional. So this is not a general attack on the constitutionality of the statute, at least as it's pled.

THE COURT: I don't think it is either.

MS. STAPLES CURD: He has not complied with the Florida Statute that requires notice to the Attorney General and various other things that need to be filed that would allow the Attorney General to intervene as the Attorney General and to defend the constitutionality of this statute.

THE COURT: That's the first I have heard of this argument. I

did not view this complaint as a general attack on the -- on section 61.3012. Appears when you look at the overall allegations of the complaint this is really an attack on Judge Lando's orders.

MS. STAPLES CURD: That's the way I read it too, Your Honor.

MR. BLAIR SIBLEY: May I respond.

THE COURT: Yes, sir.

MR. BLAIR SIBLEY: To the extent the Court is leaning that way I would ask under the liberal pleading rules that I have leave to be more specific in that this is a general attack on this particular statute and its Constitutionality.

THE COURT: I am not inclined to do that. I cannot ignore your history in this Court and in the State Courts. Frankly, while I do not think it's appropriate to enter an order restricting your ability to file lawsuits I think it's within my discretion to allow you to amend the complaint, and I'm going to deny that. I think these -- by the way this is the first lawsuit brought by Alexander Blair Sibley. So the mere fact that Montgomery Blair Sibley has filed these lawsuits does not necessarily mean it needs to be visited on Alexander. Plus, I am not sure it's appropriate to restrict the filing of lawsuits, at least at this stage. Does not mean it will pass Rule Eleven muster, but there's been no Rule Eleven request. So I don't have that before me. However, I don't think it's appropriate to restrict Mr. Sibley from filing lawsuits, at least at this stage. Mr. Sibley, Montgomery Blair Sibley, has filed a number of lawsuits but they've been different kinds of lawsuits. I have had two cases where personally he sued his former wife, trying to get this Court involved in the domestic relations

dispute. I declined to get involved in that. This would be the second lawsuit that I was involved with against Judge Lando. And I think both the younger -- I felt it was inappropriate to get involved in that case. This is another case. Actually it's a different plaintiff. While I sympathize with the defendant in a sense, it's not fun to be sued in these matters, probably don't have much of a basis to begin with and very little likelihood of prevailing on it, I am not sure you can keep somebody from filing lawsuits, at least at this stage. What is the requirement if you are going to challenge the constitutionality?

MS. STAPLES CURD: There's a requirement that you file a notice with the Court. It's actually -- there's a local rule in the Southern District of Florida that requires you comply with the Florida statute, which I can't remember the statute right offhand. It's in the first volume of the statutes. It requires you file a notice. You actually have to file a formal notice on the Attorney General in Tallahassee. I am not sure Judge Lando is the proper party.

THE COURT: She would not be the proper party. All right. Seems to me the Rooker Feldman doctrine does apply here. I am inclined to dismiss this case, Mr. Sibley, and I guess you can keep filing lawsuits if you want. I am not sure you are doing yourself or your son any good in doing that. I don't know what is going on in the State Court proceedings but it seems that is where the battle should be fought. I think you are picking the wrong place for battle. You have a Trial Court, you have an Appellate Court, you have a Supreme Court to appeal to just as does any other litigant. I don't this is appropriate litigation. Unless you can tell me there is something not in your brief that you wish to add.

MR. BLAIR SIBLEY: I appreciate the opportunity but I have not put -- there's nothing in my brief I can add to. If it's not in

my brief I have nothing more to add.

THE COURT: All right. I am going to deny the motion for order restricting future filing because there's no Rule Eleven motion. Unless somebody has something to add to the briefs I'll go ahead and consider it on the briefs then. If there's nothing else, I appreciate you all coming in today. Thank you.

MATTER CONCLUDED

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing is an accurate transcription of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

PATRICIA SANDERS, RPR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
CASE NO. 03-21885-CN-HUCK/TURNOFF

ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY, a minor,
by and through MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY,
his Father,

Plaintiff,

vs.

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her capacity as a
Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial
Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida,

Defendant.
_____/

ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANT'S MOTION TO DISMISS AND DENYING DEFENDANT'S MOTION FOR ORDER RESTRICTING FUTURE FILINGS AGAINST JUDGE LANDO

THIS MATTER is before the Court on August 27, 2003 for oral argument on the Motion to Dismiss and Motion for Order Restricting Future Filings of Defendant, Maxine Cohen Lando, in her capacity as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida ("Judge Lando"). The Court has reviewed the Complaint, the Motion, the parties' respective legal memoranda and oral argument and is fully advised in the premises. For the reasons discussed below, the Motion to Dismiss is GRANTED.

Background

Plaintiff, Alexander Blair Sibley, is the son of Montgomery Blair Sibley ("Father"), an attorney certified to practice in Florida. Plaintiff alleges that Judge Lando, who presides over the Father's divorce case, has, by one of her orders in that proceeding, violated his constitutional right of equal protection under the law and due process. The Plaintiff's divorce case, Sibley v. Sibley, case number 1994-18177-FC-04, in the Circuit Court in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida, has been ongoing since 1994. The case has apparently been acrimonious, as evidenced by the Father's numerous filings of separate actions related to issues in the divorce proceeding, including:

1. *Sibley v. Judge Maxine Cohen Lando*
   United States District Court, Southern District of Florida Case
   No. 01-2940-CIV-UNGARO-BENAGES
   Summary: allegations of constitutional violations by presiding state judge
   Outcome: dismissed on basis of *Younger* abstention.

2. *Sibley v. Judges David Gersten, Juan Ramirez, and Joseph Nesbitt*
   United States District Court, Southern District of Florida
   Case No, 00-3665-CIV-MORENO
   Summary: allegations of constitutional violations by judges
   Outcome: dismissed on basis of judicial immunity, lack of subject-matter jurisdiction.

3. *Sibley v. Mark Martinez*

United States District Court, Southern District of Florida
Case No. 02-22931-CIV-HIGHSMITH
Summary: allegations of constitutional violations by Clerk's filing process
Outcome: Pending.

4. *Sibley v. Judges Alan Schwartz, David Gersten, Mario Goderich, Gerald Cope, Robert Shevin, Maxine Cohen Lando, Victoria Platter, and Barbara Sibley*
United States District Court, Southern District of Florida
Case No. 01-3746-CIV-KING
Summary: allegations of constitutional violations by judges
Outcome: dismissed on basis of *Younger* abstention, lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Rule I I Sanctions were imposed against Plaintiff.

5. *Sibley v. Sibley*
United States District Court, Southern District of Florida
Case No. 01-1349-CIV-GOLD
Summary: removal of divorce action from Judge Lando's court
Outcome: remanded on basis of lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

6. *Sibley v. Florida Supreme Court, Harry LeeAnstead, Third District Court ofAppeal, and Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Dade County*
United States District Court, Southern District of Florida

Case No. 03-21199-CIV-LENARD
Summary: allegations of equal protection violations in decisions rendered by Florida courts.
Outcome: dismissed sua sponte for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction.

7. *Sibley v. Maxine Cohen Lando*
United States District Court, Southern District of Florida
Case No. 03-21728-CIV-JORDAN
Summary: allegations of false imprisonment due to Writ of Bodily Attachment entered by Judge Lando in divorce proceedings.
Outcome: Motion to Dismiss pending.

The Father has also filed a lawsuit against his wife in federal court in Delaware, which was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction (Case No. 8:00-CV-02997-JFM), and has filed a number of appeals and/or petitions in Florida state courts. Indeed, the Plaintiffs Father is no stranger to this Court. See *Sibley v. Sibley*, Case No. 01-2770-CIV-HIJCK and *Sibley v. Lando*, Case No. 0320942-CIV-HUCK. In those cases, the Father alleged, respectively, that his former wife interfered with his parent-child relationship, and that Judge Lando violated his constitutional rights by her orders in the divorce case. The Court dismissed those cases, respectively, because of the lack of subject matter jurisdiction and because of the *Rooker -Feldman* and the *Younger* abstention doctrines.

The Complaint in this case attacks a recent court order entered by Judge Lando in the divorce proceedings and seeks a declaratory judgment, declaring that Judge Lando's child support orders violate Plaintiffs United States Constitution rights and Florida Constitution rights.

Judge Lando seeks dismissal of the Complaint on several grounds;

a) Judge Lando has judicial immunity from the instant action because she was acting in her judicial capacity when she issued the order in question;

b) the court lacks jurisdiction under the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine because granting the Plaintiff's requested relief would nullify a decision rendered in an ongoing state court proceeding;

c) the court should abstain from determining this matter under the *Younger* abstention doctrine.

1. Motion to Dismiss
Standard on Motion to Dismiss

To warrant dismissal of a complaint under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, it must be "clear that no relief could be granted under any set of facts that could be proved consistent with the allegations." *Blackston v. Alabama*, 30 F.3d 117, 120 (11' Cir. 1994) (quoting *Hishon v. King & Spaulding*, 467 U.S. 69, 73 (1984)). Determining the propriety of granting a motion to dismiss requires a court to accept all the factual allegations in the complaint as true and to evaluate all inferences derived from those facts in the light most favorable to the plaintiff', *See Hummings v. Texaco, Inc.*, 29 F.3d 1480, 1483 (11"' Cir. 1994). The threshold of sufficiency that a complaint must meet to survive a motion to dismiss is exceedingly low. See *Ancata v. Prison Health Sys., Inc.*, 769 F.2d 700, 703 (11" Cir. 1985) (citations omitted); *Jackam v. Hosp. Corp. of America Mideast. Ltd.*, 800 F.2d 1577, 1579 (11" Or. 1983). "[Ulnless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in

support of his claim which would entitle him to relief," the complaint should not be dismissed on grounds that it fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. *Sea Ycssel, Inc, v. Reves*, 23 F.3d 345, 347 (11th Cir. 1994) (citations omitted). Nevertheless, to survive a motion to dismiss, plaintiff must do more than merely "label" his claims. *Blumel v. MS,Iander*, 919 F.Supp. 423, 425 (M.D.Fla. 1996). Moreover, when on the basis of a dispositive issue of law no construction of the factual allegations will support the cause of action, dismissal of the complaint is appropriate. *Marshall County Bd. of Educ. v. Marshall County Gas Dist.*, 992 F.2d 1171, 1174 (11 ` Cir. 1993).

Analysis

1. *Rooker-Feldman* Doctrine Bars Plaintiffs Suit

It is well-settled that federal district courts do not have jurisdiction to review decisions of state courts. See *District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman*, 460 U.S. 462, 482-86 (1983); *Staley v. Ledbetter*, 837 F.2d 1016, 1017-18 (11" Cir. 1988); *Wood v. Orange County*, 715 F, 2d 1543, 1546 (11th Cir. 1983). This rule, commonly referred to as the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine, provides that:

> [l]ower federal courts possess no power whatsoever to sit in direct review of state court decisions. If the constitutional claims presented to a United States district court are inextricably intertwined with the state court's [ruling] in a judicial proceeding . . . then the district court is in essence being called on to review the state-court decision. This the district court may not do.

Feldman, 460 U.S. at 482 n.16. Such a review rests solely in the United States Supreme Court, *Id.; Rooker v. Fidelity Trust Co.*, 263 U.S. 413 (1923). The *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine ensures that the district courts do not "trench on the exclusive authority of the Supreme Court [of the United States] to review state court decisions for errors of federal law." *Wood*, 715 F.2d at 1547. Where the federal claim asserted is "inextricably intertwined" with a judicial decision of the state court, the plaintiffs remedy lies in a direct appeal to the Supreme Court, not with the district court. ht at 1546 (citations omitted). "[The Rooker[-Feldman] bar also operates where the plaintiff fails to raise his federal claims in state court." *Id.*

Here, the complaint alleges that Judge Lando's orders violated Plaintiffs federal constitutional rights. As such, Plaintiffs asserted federal claim is "inextricably intertwined" with the judicial decision of the state court, and cannot be adjudicated by this Court.

2. Younger Doctrine Justifies Abstention

Defendant also argues that this Court should abstain from deciding Plaintiff's claims for declaratory relief under the doctrine of *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U. S. 37 (1971), and its progeny. The *Younger* abstention doctrine provides that federal courts should, based on interests of comity and federalism, abstain from assuming jurisdiction whenever federal claims have been or could be presented in ongoing state judicial proceedings that concern important state interests. *Hawaii Housing Auth. v. Midkiff*, 467 U.S. 229, 237 (1984). Although *Younger* was a state criminal proceeding, its principles are fully applicable to civil cases when important state interests are involved. *31 Foster Children v. Bush*, 329 F.3D 1255 (11th Cir. 2003). The *Younger* abstention doctrine

embodies "a strong federal policy against federal-court interference with pending state judicial proceedings, absent extraordinary circumstances." *Beltran v. California*, 871 F.2d 777, 781 (9" Cir. 1988), *Middlesex County Ethics Committee v. Garden State BarAss'n*, 457 U.S. 423, 431 (1982). Where, as here, assumption of jurisdiction by a federal court would interfere with pending state proceedings, whether criminal or civil, abstention under *Younger* is generally appropriate. *Word of Faith Outreach Or. Church. Inc., v. Morales*, 986 F. 2d 962 (5'h Cir. 1993). The fact that Plaintiff's action is filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 is no bar to *Younger* abstention. *Trainor v. Hernandez*, 431 U.S. 434, 450 (1977). The *Younger* doctrine represents an independent barrier even to § 1983 suits that seek injunctive relief. *In re Fussell*, 928 F.2d 712, 715 (5" Cir. 1991).

The Supreme Court has established a three prong test for application of the *Younger* abstention doctrine: (1) the state proceedings are ongoing; (2) the proceedings implicate an important state interest; and (3) the state proceedings provide an adequate opportunity to raise federal questions. *Middlesex*, 457 U.S. at 423. Each of the three prongs is clearly present here. The State of Florida has an important interest in guaranteeing the ability of its courts to protect the rights of its citizens who invoke the state court process, including domestic relations and child support matters. All that is required under the *Younger* abstention doctrine is "the opportunity to present their federal claims in the state proceedings." *Juidice v. Vail*, 430 U.S. 327, 337 (1977); *Fresh Intern. Corp. v. Agricultural Labor Relations Bd.*, 805 F.2d 1353, 1362 (9th Cir. 1986). Florida circuit courts have the power in all circumstances to consider constitutional issues and even to decide § 1983 claims. *Key Haven Associated Enters, Inc. v. Board of Trustees of the Internal Imp. Trust Fund*, 427 So.2d 153 (Fla. 1982); *Lloyd v. Page*, 474 So.2d 865 (Fla. 1st

DCA 1985). It is appropriate for the federal courts to indulge the presumption that state courts are willing and able to vindicate federal constitutional rights. *Cinema Blue of Charlotte, Inc. v. Gilchrist*, 887 F.2d 49, 54 (4th Cir. 1989).

The state court, which has heard, and can continue to resolve, the issues Plaintiff attempts to raise in this lawsuit, is the proper forum for Plaintiffs complaints. Because Plaintiff, through his Father, has an opportunity to fully participate in the Father's state court proceedings and to seek all appropriate remedies, legal and equitable, it is appropriate for this Court to abstain from hearing this case.

2. Motion For Order Restricting Future Filings

Because of the numerous and unsuccessful (frivolous, according to the Defendant,) cases which Plaintiff's Father has filed challenging Defendant's rulings in the domestic relations proceedings, Defendant asks that the Court place restrictions on the Father with regard to filing any new cases against Defendant. While the Court sympathizes with the Defendant, and generally concurs with her that the Father's previous federal cases were, at least, borderline-frivolous, for the reasons discussed at oral argument of the Motion for Order Restricting Future Filings Against Judge Lando, this Court determines that the requested relief is not appropriate at this time. However, if Judge Lando believes she has a basis for seeking sanctions pursuant to Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, she may file an appropriate motion within 15 days of this Order. Of course, Defendant has the protection provided by Rule 11 with respect to any new federal cases the Father may file in the future.

Conclusion

The Court concludes, under both the *Rooker-Feldman* and the *Younger* abstention doctrines, that it would be inappropriate to exercise any subject matter jurisdiction that it may have over Plaintiff's federal claims asserted in this case.[1] Accordingly, the Motion to Dismiss is GRANTED. The Motion for Order Restricting Future Filings Against Judge Lando is DENIED. All other pending motions are DENIED as moot and this matter is CLOSED.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, Miami, Florida this 3rd of September, 2003.

Paul C. Huck
United States District Judge

Copy furnished to:
Montgomery Blair Sibley, Esq.
Stephanie S. Curd, Esq.

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[1] Because the Court has determined that this case should be dismissed under both the *Rooker-Feldman* and the *Younger* abstention doctrines, the Court need not, and therefore does not, discuss the other arguments supporting the Motion.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 11TH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR DADE
COUNTY, FLORIDA
FAMILY DIVISION

IN RE: The Marriage of

CASE NO.: 94-18177 FC 19

Barbara Sibley,

Petitioner,

and

Montgomery Blair Sibley,

Respondent.
_____/

ORDER DENYING MOTION TO INTERVENE BY ALEXANDER BLAIR SIBLEY

THIS CAUSE came on before the Court on December 15, 2003 upon the Motion to Intervene filed by Alexander Blair Sibley upon the motion of his attorney/father Montgomery Blair Sibley, the Respondent/Fortner Husband in this cause, and the Court having heard argument of counsel and being otherwise fully advised in the premises, it is ORDERED and ADJUDGED as follows:

1. Montgomery Blair Sibley has an inherent conflict in representing Alexander Blair Sibley with regard to the Motion to Intervene.

2. This motion has been previously made in another form by Montgomery Blair Sibley, Respondent/Former Husband when he argued that Alexander

Blair Sibley was being denied equal protection of the law by the rulings of this Court with regard to child support due and owing to the three (3) children of Respondent/Former Husband's marriage to Petitioner/Former Wife. Respondent/Former Husband's issue was rejected by this Court's predecessor, which ruling was affirmed on appeal.

3. The Motion to Intervene on behalf of Alexander Blair Sibley be and the same is hereby DENIED.

DONE and ORDERED in Chambers, at Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida, this day January 5, 2004.

Thomas S. Wilson, Jr.
Circuit Court Judge

Circuit Court Judge

cc: Jay M. Levy, Esquire
Montgomery Blair Sibley, pro se
Bette E. Quiat, Esquire

[DO NOT PUBLISH]

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

No. 03-14915
Non-Argument Calendar

D.C. Docket No. 03-21885-CV-PC

MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY,
a father representing a minor,
Alexander Blair Sibley,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

versus

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her
capacity as a Judge of the Circuit
Court of the 11`" Judicial District in
and for Miami-Dade County, Florida,

Defendant-Appellee.
_____/

Appeal from the United States District Court for
the Southern District of Florida
(February 20, 2004)

Before TJOFLAT, ANDERSON and WILSON, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Montgomery Blair Sibley ("Plaintiff"), on behalf of his

son Alexander Sibley ("Sibley"), filed a civil suit against the Hon. Maxine Cohen Lando, Judge of the Circuit Court of the 11 Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida ("Defendant"). Plaintiff argued that Defendant's child support orders against him, and her application of Fla. Stat. § 61.30(12),[2] violated his rights under the Fifth Amendment's due process clause, the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause, provisions of the Florida Constitution, and Florida laws. In particular, Plaintiff argued that Defendant's orders illegally required him to pay more than his annual income in child support to the children of his previous marriage, which left him without funds to support Sibley, the offspring of his second marriage. During a hearing on Defendant's motion to dismiss the complaint, Plaintiff requested permission to amend his complaint in order to more specifically allege an overall constitutional challenge against Fla. Stat. § 61.30(12).

In a comprehensive order entered September 23, 2003, Record, Vol. 1 at 9, the district court concluded that, "under both the *Rooker-Feldman* and *Younger* abstention doctrines ... it would be inappropriate to exercise any subject matter jurisdiction that it may have over Plaintiff's federal claims

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[2] Section 61.30(12) of the Florida Statutes provides that a court may consider the existence of other children who were born after a child support obligation arose when determining whether to grant an upward modification of a child support award. Fla. Stat. § 61.30(12)(a). However, the existence of subsequent children "may only be raised in a proceeding for an upward modification of an existing award and may not be applied to justify a decrease in an existing award." Id. at § 61.30(12)(c).

asserted in this case." The court therefore granted Defendant's motion to dismiss and denied Plaintiff leave to amend. Plaintiff now appeals.

We conclude that the *Younger* doctrine required the district court to abstain for the reasons the court expressed in its September 23 order. Plaintiff contends that the court abused its discretion in denying him leave to amend his complaint. We find no abuse of discretion; an amendment would be futile.

AFFIRMED.

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

No. 03-14915

MONTGOMERY BLAIR SIBLEY,
a father representing a minor,
Alexander Blair Sibley,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

versus

MAXINE COHEN LANDO, in her
capacity as a Judge of the Circuit
Court of the 11`" Judicial District in
and for Miami-Dade County, Florida,

Defendant-Appellee.
_____/

Appeal from the United States District Court for
the Southern District of Florida
(March 31, 2004)

Appellant's motion to publish this Court's opinion is DENIED.

Appellant's request that this Court declare Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-02 unconstitutional is DENIED.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, TREATIES, STATUTES, ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS INVOLVED

U.S. Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

U.S. Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment, Section 5:

The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

28 U.S.C. §1653:

Defective allegations of jurisdiction may be amended, upon terms, in the trial or appellate courts.

28 U.S.C §2072(b):

Such rules shall not abridge, enlarge or modify any substantive right. All laws in conflict with such rules shall be of no further force or effect after such rules have taken effect.

42 U.S.C. §1983:

Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress, except that in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable. For the purposes of this section, any Act of Congress applicable exclusively to the District of Columbia shall be considered to be a statute of the District of Columbia.

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 15(a):

Amendments - A party may amend the party's pleading once as a matter of course at any time before a responsive pleading is served or, if the pleading is one to which no responsive pleading is permitted and the action has not been placed upon the trial calendar, the party may so amend it at any time within 20 days after it is served. Otherwise a party may amend the party's pleading only by leave of court or by written consent of the adverse party; and leave shall be freely given when justice so requires. A party shall plead in response to an amended pleading within the time remaining for response to the original pleading or within 10 days after service of the amended pleading, whichever period may be the longer, unless the court otherwise orders.

Eleventh Circuit Rule 36-2:

An opinion shall be unpublished unless a majority of the panel decides to publish it. Unpublished opinions are not considered binding precedent. They may be cited as persuasive authority, provided that a copy of the unpublished opinion is attached to or incorporated within the brief, petition, motion or response in which such a citation is made.

Florida Statute §61.30(12)(c):

The issue of subsequent children under paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) may only be raised in a proceeding for an upward modification of an existing award and may not be applied to justify a decrease in an existing award.